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ATG Interviews Jane Burke

Cris Ferguson

Furman University, cferguson13@murraystate.edu

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ATG Interviews Jane Burke

General Manager, Serials Solutions

Column Editor: **Cris Ferguson** (Electronic Resources/Serials Librarian, James B. Duke Library, Furman University, 3300 Poinsett Highway, Greenville, SC 29613; Phone: 864-294-2713) <cris.ferguson@furman.edu>

Jane Burke, formerly the president of NOTIS and CEO of Endeavor, has returned to the library world, assuming the role of the General Manager of Serials Solutions. I recently had the pleasure of speaking with Jane about her return to all things library, her new position, the future direction of Serials Solutions, and more. — CF

ATG: *Against the Grain* has interviewed you before, in the June 1994 issue. At the time the interview was conducted you were President of NOTIS. Could you briefly outline where your career path has taken you since then?

JB: That interview happened at an interesting time, because in June of 1994 I and a number of other people were terminated by Ameritech. Ameritech had acquired NOTIS and subsequently had acquired Dynix, and in the merging of the two companies in June of 1994 a number of us were made redundant. Immediately, a group of NOTIS staff, including myself, founded Endeavor Information Systems.

ATG: *How long were you with Endeavor?*

JB: I was with Endeavor through early 2003. Endeavor was a wonderful experience. There were a number of us that were involved in the start up, and I had the honor of being the CEO of Endeavor. In April 2000, we made the decision to sell the company to Elsevier, and a number of us were asked to stay on for a time and continue to guide the company. I did that until early 2003.

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when science changed from, as the great Kepler once said, “thinking God’s thought after him” to the more modern view of thinking God’s thoughts for him, fierce debate was vouchsafed. Now science wants no competition whatsoever. Does the scientific lady protest too much? It’s hard to say.

Of course it’s silly to call for some unnatural and severe demarcation between what science can explain and what religion can proffer. Life is not so easily placed into categories, or at least it is not so easily lived in that fashion. Would it not be better to teach both? Isn’t this what we always do in matters of “why”? It does not strike me as possible that science can conduct itself (nor has it so far) without often declaiming, and I believe rightly, upon the why of life. But how can it complain when other ways of knowing “obtrude” to explain the how? Since it appears inevitable that science will inexora-

ATG: *I read in Library Journal that you spent some time working at Barnes and Noble while you were away from the library world. Could you tell us a little bit more about what you did in your two year hiatus?*

JB: I did work at Barnes and Noble, and I enjoyed it very much. It was a very different experience. I had never worked retail, and I was absolutely at the bottom of the ladder. I learned a lot about team work and a lot about popular culture. And I made almost no money.


During 2004, I worked for a number of months doing business development for a company called Cadmus Communications. Cadmus is a company that provides services to journal publishers, everything from digital conversion and XML mark-up, all the way to actual print. They are the leading provider of services to scientific and technical publishers.

ATG: *That sounds like an interesting business. How did they get into that market?*

JB: They were a printer originally and had been printing scientific journals for many years. As all of it has become digital, the nature of their services has changed. I learned a lot about what major industries are doing with technologies. On the library side we look at these technologies and we utilize them. But when you are looking at how major publishers are trying to make sure that they are providing good content, they are using them in heavy duty ways. I really learned a lot about that. I had an opportunity to watch some textbook transformations, which is the notion of taking a textbook and marking it up completely in XML, so that it can

bly continue in this fashion, whenever such whys intrude, competing ones should — really must — be relayed as well. To forbid it would be to forbid a full recitation of disclosure. It would be the equivalent of discussing the Civil War and pointing to only one cause.

It is highly unlikely this will be the outcome of the debate now raging in Pennsylvania. By the time these words reach your eyes the case may have been decided. Given the nature of our lives these days, intelligent design will probably be outlawed if not otherwise forbidden. That strikes me as narrow-minded, as much as was forbidding the teaching of evolution at the early part of the last century. I said earlier that Mencken made fun of what he called the boobosie who feared evolution in the Scopes trial. He poked fun rightly so. But he also said something proponents of the science-only school of thought should recall with a soupcon of disquietude.

He said, in his inimitable Mencken fashion, that intellectuals are the only people who will say a stupid thing ... twice. 

be very easily updated and very easily issued on a chapter by chapter basis. The re-use of content was fascinating.

ATG: *What about your new position persuaded you to join Serials Solutions and the ProQuest team?*

JB: I think very highly of ProQuest as an organization. Under the current leadership they are really doing some fascinating and forward-looking things. They are digitizing a lot of content and making it available. They are working hard at making things like 19th century parliamentary content, African-American archives, and a whole variety of scholarly materials available in a digital form.

Serials Solutions, in my opinion, is in the midst of what libraries are trying to deal with. The nature of library collections has changed. It is not in the process of changing; it has already changed, particularly for the academic library. The majority of what they buy today is digital content. Serials Solutions is providing solutions for managing digital collections. If you look at the management of electronic collections, it is an inherently different art than the management of print collections, and Serials Solutions is right in the middle of that.

ATG: *What is your role as the General Manager? Where will you be based?*

JB: I am the person in charge of the Serials Solutions organization, and I am based in Seattle.

ATG: *Your last several positions in the library world were managing integrated library systems. How do you think those experiences will serve you as the General Manager of Serials Solutions? What kinds of new things do you think you will have to work on?*

JB: Working in and with the library market is something that I enjoy very much. There are some similar issues with managing digital content, mostly around making it apparent and easy to find. The thing that is very different is the relationship between digital content and the digital content publisher, which is much closer than in the print environment. For the most part, libraries acquire their print materials through third parties, like jobbers and subscription agents, whereas digital content is mostly acquired directly from the publishers. One of the things that I am learning and liking about Serials Solutions is the fact that we talk directly to the publishers to get the data that we provide back to libraries. You get a much better sense of both sides of that value chain.

ATG: *When I was first introduced to Serials Solutions, the company had fewer than ten employees. How big is the company now?*

JB: We have 51 people today.

ATG: *How do you see Serials Solutions growing?*

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JB: I see **Serials Solutions** continuing to grow quickly, and I see us doing that in a couple of different ways. On Friday, September 30, 2005 we will have the general release of our fifth product, and we expect to continue to add modules of a digital content management system. One of the real strengths of this organization is its ability to create and to deliver module after module. The company began with its **A-Z** listing service, and we now actually have five modules. I expect to see growth by continuing to work very closely with libraries and find out what their problems are and deliver solutions to those problems.

I also believe we have some opportunities to utilize some of **Serials Solutions** technologies by working with publishers. If you look at a publisher, sometimes they need things, like sets of MARC records or linking imbedded into their content. I see that as another growth vehicle. Although, our primary focus is, and will continue to be, dealing directly with libraries and providing them with solutions.

ATG: *Do you see the Serials Solutions electronic collections and management tools being paired with ProQuest's content? In what ways?*

JB: I certainly think there are some opportunities to do that. One possible area of collaboration is where **ProQuest** has bundles of content on the same subject but with different metadata. I think we can utilize some of our tools to make them a more cohesive package. In this way, we could contribute value back to **ProQuest**.

ATG: *When Serials Solutions A-Z list first came on the market, one of the selling points of the service was that the company was unfiliated with any larger vendor and independent of outside pressures. Now that Serials Solutions has been purchased by ProQuest, I have heard concerns from librarians about their subscription and holdings information being in the hands of a content provider, as well as concerns about the bias of the data toward one vendor over another. Could you talk a little bit about how you and the Serials Solutions team are addressing those concerns?*

JB: Those are concerns that were addressed before I joined the company. **Serials Solutions** values its neutrality with the people that provide us data. We are very careful about our neutrality, and **ProQuest** respects that a great deal. We understand and **ProQuest** understands that if we are going to be able to continue to provide full solutions to our libraries, we have to be able to offer data from everybody.

This concern was laid out on the table very early in the relationship with **ProQuest**. It was settled completely on the side of neutrality for the libraries, and it is very strictly adhered to. I give **Peter McCracken** tremendous credit for that. **Peter** is the founding librarian of the company, but he is also in charge of day-to-day acquisition of data. He guards **Serials Solutions'** neutrality pretty fiercely.

ATG: *How do you see the advent of Electronic Resource Management Systems affecting Serials Solutions and its competitors?*

JB: I see them becoming more and more important, as well as more functionally rich. I also see them being more divergent. ERM systems have been guided a great deal by the digital federation ERMI document, which has been an interesting phenomenon. The libraries essentially did a design before the vendors could actually put products together. Certainly, **Innovative** and the **University of Washington** and their early partnership were very influential, but there was a document there for all of us to work off of. That document has given an important structure to the ERMS offerings, but I think now we are going to see different vendors provide different features with their ERMS. You are going to see them begin to have differing functionalities. Functionalities will sprout out differently from vendor to vendor.

We believe that our situation is really a very good one. First, as we provide our ERMS, we are providing it with the best knowledge base in the industry. That is a value that **Serials Solutions** offers to its libraries that is unmatched. No one else has full-time librarian staff members looking at the data feeds. Everyone else seems to try to do it programmatically, and while we do it programmatically, we then turn it over to five dedicated people, who just comb through the data and clean it up. Every change that we make is reflected back to all of our libraries immediately.

Secondly, our technologies are so new, that we can take advantage of being a Web services organization using Web services architecture. Web services architecture is very important and it has not been embraced or understood by the library community as quickly as I thought it would be, but it is very significant. Because our technologies are entirely based on being a Web service, we can hook back into a library's ILS system and have data fed in and out of their acquisitions module, for example. I really like the ability to put Web services to practical uses in the library community, because I think we very much need to do it.

I think that we are going to see some of our competitors in the ILS space, working from the ILS perspective first. But, just like we have seen with link resolvers, if you don't have good data, then you have a module that is adding to your work load and not cutting it down. We really feel like we have to do both, but we feel we have a huge step ahead because we have a knowledge base and have developed it over the last five or six years.

ATG: *What is your vision for Serials Solutions? Where would you like to see the company go in the next five years?*

JB: I would like to see **Serials Solutions** stay very close to the market and to its customers. We deliver real value to our libraries, and I think they appreciate it. We feel like we have wonderful dialogue with them on an ongoing basis. That is something that is priceless, and that is at the top of the list.

I would like to see **Serials Solutions** continue to have the very deep library background

that it has. I would also like to see us continuing to build innovative solutions for these collections that just keep changing and changing. Inherent in that is moving beyond serials and into books, into management tools for eBooks, eBook collections, e-document collections, and institutional repositories. As more of the content that libraries are managing is electronic, you need variations on the tools.

ATG: *Reading over the 1994 ATG interview, two statements you made leapt out at me. First, you said, "Today, the role of the librarian is to organize electronic access." You also said that, "Our greatest challenge as librarians in the future is in the area of public access." While at the time, you were referring to systems like NOTIS, those statements are still quite applicable today. How do you think the role of librarians has changed in the last 10 years? What do you think the role of librarians will be in the future?*

JB: As the nature of collections has actually changed, librarians need to go back to the very roots of librarianship. The founders of the art of library science in this country were concerned about the organization of knowledge and schemes to do that. What I see as our challenge now in libraries is being assertive within our institutions about our ability to offer that and have that show through as value.

On the academic campus, as an example, the physical connection between the faculty and the library has become quite remote. The library spends money and acquires all of these electronic journals, and the faculty member accesses them from the office. They don't have to come to the library anymore. Consequently, they tend to forget who has acquired those journals for them. They think the resources just appear out of the ether. The library has to do things to emphasize the very basic and absolutely essential skill of organizing information.

Another thing that has changed dramatically in the last decade within the academic community is that we have automated the center of the academy. It used to be that we automated all the edges, things like online registration, course records, the library, and payroll. But now, we are in a situation where **Blackboard**, **WebCT**, and other courseware offerings have automated the very center of the institution. Librarians have a tremendous opportunity to use their skills and to organize information in such a way that it becomes much more interrelated to the courseware.

That again goes back to utilizing those skills in ways that make the very richness of all this content very apparent. In an environment where both the students and the faculty don't need to come to the physical library, librarians need to make resources apparent by using specialized tools. This accounts for federated search systems, link resolvers, and ERMS. Good ERMS systems will give librarians time to do the outreach that is necessary.

ATG: *Jane, thank you so much for your time. Is there anything else you would like to add?*

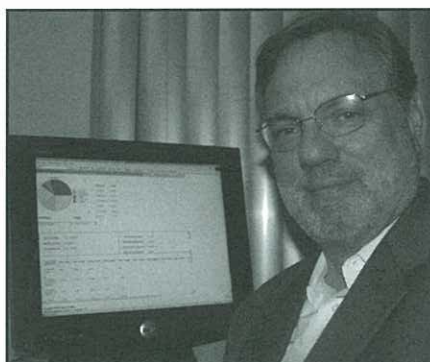
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General Manager, Library Dynamics <hharris@librarydynamics.com>

by Robyn A Dudley, MLIS, BA Ed. (Librarian and Technology Consultant, Charleston, SC; Phone: 843-860 9644)
<rdudley007@hotmail.com>

"Visualization allows our clients to get a graphical overview of the library in relation to...other libraries, library groups, or authoritative bibliographic sources ... drilling down to the level of wanted detail — even to individual full MARC bibliographic records."

— Howard Harris



ATG: Who is Library Dynamics?

HH: Library Dynamics offers libraries innovative tools for analyzing, understanding, and making decisions about the development and management of library collections, resources, and capabilities. Library Dynamics, founded in 1998, initiated *Weedlist*. This program matched the shelflists of numerous small and large academic libraries to the titles from each of the three successive *Books for College Libraries*. Libraries have used this tool to identify titles dropped from *BCL* as prime candidates for weeding. Librarians requests for additional services have led Library Dynamics to bring to market a number of additional capabilities. In 2004 and 2005, Library Dynamics has expanded its services dramatically.

ATG: Howard, why and how did you get involved with Library Dynamics? Were you there in 1998 when it was founded?

HH: Robyn, your question lets me tell you a little about Library Dynamics and what led me to take on the role of General Manager of our company. Both of these comments should give you some insight into our company.

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JB: One of the reasons that I am working with *Serials Solutions* and *ProQuest* is for the opportunity to be in the library community at a time of unprecedented opportunity. This is a time of real opportunity, not just challenges. As we continue to see an avalanche of various pieces of digital content, the library's ability to organize and present it is more critical than ever. There aren't any physical shelves to browse, and you have to use the available technologies to make what you have available. 🌱

Bill Buchanan, a successful innovator and publisher in our industry, established **Library Dynamics** with **Bob Asleson** in 1998. Initially, the principle product of **Library Dynamics** was the development of *Weedlist*. *Weedlist* was based upon **Bill's** work with **Evan Farber**, former College Librarian at **Earlham College**. **Farber** proposed that academic librarians could base weeding and storage issues on titles that had been superseded in subsequent editions of *Books for College Libraries*. (**Farber** wrote an article about this for *Library Journal* which can be found in **Farber, E. I.** (1997)... *Library Journal*, 122(13), 44-45.

I knew **Bill** in the 1990's. He was a very interesting and creative guy, and he was successful in bringing **Evan Farber's** idea to fruition through *Weedlist* for quite a while. However, **Bill's** health began to fail in 1998, and any further development on *Weedlist* came to a stop. When **Bill** passed away in 2000, the library community lost a very creative and productive member.

After leaving the **University of Maryland College Park** in 2001 where I had been the Director for Information Technology, I returned to an active consulting practice with library clients. In late 2001 I began discussions with **Bob Asleson** and **Eric Calaluca**, principals of the then re-invigorated **Library Dynamics**; however, my real interest in the company developed at the **ACRL Conference** in April 2003 in Charlotte. At about the same time, I had a conversation with **Bob Kieft**, the College Librarian at **Haverford College**. Our conversation focused on the type of collection analysis work that the **Tri College Consortium** had in mind and the type of service that they felt that they and others in the library community needed.

At that point, I was hooked. I could see a real problem to be solved and my background and experience contributed to my belief that I knew how I could approach the problem. At that point I renewed my conversations with **Li-**

brary Dynamics' principals and was offered the position of General Manager. Work began on **Spectra CRC** in the Summer and Fall of 2003 and by **Midwinter 2004** in San Diego we were showing **Spectra CRC** for the first time.

ATG: Is *Paratext* your parent company? Who else is on the team at *Library Dynamics* and what strengths to they bring to the company?

HH: Although **Library Dynamics** briefly operated as a division of **Paratext**, it soon became a separate corporate entity. I don't think there is any way to overestimate the value that such working relationships bring to a company. The ability to benefit from a wide spectrum of insights and experience within our two organizations gives us the flexibility of a smaller company plus a number of advantages possessed by much larger companies.

In **Library Dynamics**, we have a highly talented team. **Bob Asleson** and **Eric Calaluca**, principals in **Paratext**, assist **Library Dynamics** with administrative matters and accounting. **Susan Severtson** leads our nationwide Marketing and Sales efforts. Three of us from across our organization who are librarians serve as a product development team to assess new and existing products and services, product requirements and specifications, requested changes to existing products and services, market opportunity, and product support.

We have four people that work with client **MARC** bibliographic and use data by analyzing and processing it into a resource for our clients. They also create and maintain an impressive online search and retrieval capability to host that bibliographic resource.

Separately, we have a team of three Systems, Application, and Internet Technology technical staff who develop and deliver the visualization technology that allows us to work with quantitative data in new and exciting ways. We also have a group that focuses on the hosting and management of the servers that provide our Internet accessible services.

ATG: I noticed on the company Website for *Library Dynamics*, that you produce *Spectra CRC* and *NATC (North American Title Count)*. Please tell us about your background and how your experience has enabled you to publish these tools for libraries.

HH: From the beginning of my career I have focused on technology, planning, management, and systems. Early in my career I had experience with approval plan book purchasing at **Argonne National Laboratory's Library** and also as a part of the Systems Department at the **University of Chicago Library** where we made use of the **MARC** tapes to create an alerting service for bibliographers based on language and subject profiles.

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